

The Effect of the State on the Evolution of Print Media in European Mediterranean Countries

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The aim of this article is to analyze the role of the government in the evolution and development of print media in European Mediterranean countries. Specifically, it examines the cases of Portugal, Spain, Italy, and France.

In this study, the State's influence on the development of media companies is approached from four different perspectives: censorship of the press, the control of the press in democratic regimes, government aid, and its limits on concentration of ownership.

When focussing on the regulatory role of the State as a fundamental element in the development of the press, this article highlights that an historical turning point was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of August 26, 1789, enacted at the beginning of the French Revolution. This established a mandate to ensure and regulate freedom of information by law, which has always prevailed in the spirit of the various regulatory measures in these countries.

Introduction

This article¹ analyzes the role of the government in the evolution and development of print media in European Mediterranean countries. Specifically, it examines the cases of Portugal, Spain, Italy, and

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France. In this singular framework,² it looks at the historic moments that can be considered crucial to shaping the present composition of different news models and influencing their evolution. It also examines the most important legislative measures in the development of the print media market in the last 50 years.

The article also dissects the following: intervention by the State in the resources and management of media companies; systems of distribution; the extent of diffusion, capital, and participation in different newspapers; and the extent of investment in advertising. It also details the government actions that have greatly influenced the development and diffusion of the papers. From this point of view, it is important to highlight the impact of the Second World War in France and Italy, as well as the dictatorships and transitions to democracy afterward in Spain and Portugal, on the creation of different print media models.

Remember that Italy as well as France established their democracies in an era characterized by a strong influence of the welfare state (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), whereas Spain and Portugal underwent their transitions to democracy amid the global expansion of the neoliberal system. From an administrative point of view, however, perhaps the decentralizing role of the state in the development of print media and the defense of media pluralism are even more important.

In the cases of France and Italy, the end of the Second World War was a turning point in shaping the role of the state in the regulation of the print media system in both countries. The development of print media in Portugal and Spain is explained within an historical context marked by a transition to democracy that required different ways of establishing media plurality in a new kind of market.

The choice of these four countries is not only based on their geographic proximity, a fact which may make us think of a cultural macro region with common cultural, political, and/or economic traditions (their languages share Latin roots); rather it is also based on mutual influences they are assumed to have had, historically speaking, when establishing regulatory policies, and not only with regard to the media.

We cannot overlook the fact that, even in today's globalized world, these countries continue to hold annual bilateral summits at the highest level.

When focussing on the regulatory role of the State as a fundamental element in the development of the press, we highlight that an historical turning point was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of August 26, 1789, enacted at the beginning of the French Revolution. This established a mandate to ensure and regulate freedom of information by law, which has always prevailed in the spirit of the various regulatory measures in these countries.

¹ This article is in keeping with the line of research «L'intervention de l'État dans le modèle de concentration, distribution et diffusion de la presse française », carried out at the Institut Français de Presse (Université Panthéon-Assas- Paris II).

² Authors like Hallin and Mancini have called it the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model.

Within Europe, the majority of the analyses are studies of the role of the State in specific countries or studies comparing the different journalistic traditions in some countries (mainly France, Great Britain, and/or Germany) due to the strong tradition of research in those countries. However, we believe that those comparative studies did not analyze the Government's role in the way we shall do so here.

In this study, the State's influence on the development of media companies is approached from four different perspectives: censorship of the press, the control of the press in democratic regimes, government aid, and limits on concentration of ownership. These four aspects were chosen because our field research clearly indicated they were fundamental to understanding the press-State relationship in the four countries that are the focus of the study. As our research advanced, we became aware that these aspects were essential to understanding the causes that have led to the development of the diverse business strategies, some more successful than others, which have given rise to a certain business positioning and the resulting news business model in each country.

1. *Censorship of Print Media, Limits to Freedom of Expression and Publication*

1.1 *Portugal*

Over the course of its history, the Portuguese print media market has been characterized by censorship, which was instituted in 1926 as a result of a military coup and produced the corresponding loss of freedom of expression and publication. This situation lasted until the end of the Estado Novo dictatorship. After nearly five decades, censorship was abolished on April 25, 1974, when a coup d'état ended 48 years of dictatorship.

By law, periodicals, single issues, fliers, brochures, circulars, and any other publication that dealt with political or social matters were subject to censorship. Foreign periodicals, magazines, and pictures distributed in the country were also subject to censorship. The directors, editors, and managers of newspaper companies were under constant scrutiny and subject to the criteria of the political police.

1.2 *Spain*

Insofar as it completely disrupted the print media system created in Spain over the course of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) opened a new, completely different era characterized by state intervention. On February 1, 1938, in the middle of the war, the composition of the new government was made public in Burgos. It was headed by General Francisco Franco. Joaquín Serrano Suñer, the Minister of the Interior,³ was to be his strongman. Their goal, in addition to achieving military victory, consisted of constructing "el Nuevo Estado" (the New State) along the lines of the totalitarian models that were spreading through Europe. In this political-administrative

³ Ministry of Government since November 1938.

system, a new print media law played an essential role:⁴ It put the media at the service of the government and entrusted it with the mission of re-educating people with new values. Previous censorship, applied by the National Press Service (SNP in Spanish) and dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, was one of the tools used with the most intensity, along with orders and news of mandatory publication. At the same time, some rigorous control mechanisms were established, from the appointment of newspaper directors by the SNP to an Official Register of Journalists (ROP in Spanish) authorized to work in the profession. In 1951, the Ministry of Information and Tourism⁵ was created to centralize all of these supervisory functions.

The system of censorship from 1938 ended with a limited process of freedom expressed in the Law of Press and Printing in 1966.⁶ This law was complemented by the Statute of Advertising (1964), the creation of the National Union of Press, Radio, Television and Advertising (1964),⁷ the Statute of Publications for Children and Youth (1967) and the Statute of the Profession of Journalism (1967),⁸ among other laws. The new regime for print media made newspaper companies move from the domain of national interest to one of private initiative, which is why orders and previous censorship as normal procedure were reserved exclusively for cases of national emergency or war. Nonetheless, a Register of Newspaper Companies (REP in Spanish) was imposed. The REP contained all the data about each publication and its previous consignments. Also, in agreement with the concept of general interest news, the government could obligate any publication to insert notices from the General Press Department (DGP in Spanish) free of charge. Furthermore, the law authorized the administrative seizure of publications and contemplated sanctions for those who wrote or published whatever was considered contrary to the "Fundamental Principles of the Movement" and the legal code of the Franco regime. The law also imposed strict rules for the appointment of directors and maintained the Official Register of Journalists, with all of its journalists possessing an identity card from the ministry that authorized them to work in the profession, as well as a professional Ethics Panel, which replaced the "Courts of Honor" from 1955. As such, the government reserved the wide-sweeping power to levy sanctions, although journalists were allowed to appeal possible administrative sanctions by opening lawsuits against the State. Despite maintaining a repressive character, this law allowed the establishment of numerous newspapers and some areas of freedom of expression. Certainly, Spain was aligned with totalitarian regimes, which, in the interwar period, began to enact regulation and control over journalism as an instrument of control over print media (Gay, 1991, p. 388).

1.3 Italy

⁴ Print Media Law from April 22, 1938.

⁵ It assumed the functions of the Sub-secretary of Popular Education dependent on the Ministry of National Education.

⁶ Law 14/1966, from March 18.

⁷ Decree 1182/1964, from April 23. In 1974, the union was named Sindicato Nacional de Información (National Union of Information).

⁸ Decree 744/1967, from April 13, later modified.

In Italy, Law 374 (February 2, 1939), which repealed the regulations of Law 654 (May 26, 1932), made it mandatory to consign eight copies of any printed publication to different institutions: one copy for the Ministry of Popular Culture, three for the Prefecture, one for the District Attorney of the Crown, and three for the provincial office of the Ministry of Education. What is noteworthy about this law is that its first article extended the ruling to include any reprint that had been altered, either in content or form.

It also required all publications to print the legal residence of the printer and/or that of the editor in an easily visible place, in addition to the year (for the Christian era and for the Fascist era) of the publication (art. 5). After Mussolini's fall on July 25, 1943, and the June 2, 1946 referendum that restored the republic, a new Constitution was adopted and went into effect on January 1, 1948. Article 21 of this Constitution guaranteed freedom of the press.

1.4 France

The law of freedom of the press from 1881,⁹ still in effect, although modified on different occasions, nullified the prevailing preventive measures up until then and cut back the former administrative measures on publishing. However, in the application of article 11 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789), which established legal limits to this freedom, with the goal of preserving it and protecting others, some legal reservations were established. Offenses against the President of the Republic, direct incitement to commit infractions and crimes, disobeying military commanders, affronts against foreign institutions or sovereigns, etc., could be persecuted. In exchange previous offenses were excluded, and overall the right to criticize political and administrative powers was protected. The Correctional Court was reserved only for offenses of defamation toward individuals. Other offenses were under the jurisdiction of the High Court (Cour d'Assises). The preventive seizure of publications by administrative powers was prohibited in 1889. The law was temporarily suspended in 1884 and 1893 due to anarchist crises in both years.

Censorship returned in 1914 as a result of the First World War. An Office of Press attached to the Ministry of Defense was created. It reviewed all writing before it was published, producing numerous clashes between newspapers and military authorities. However, it made the war bearable for the civilian population and proved to be effective in maintaining the faith in victory (Albert, 1970, p. 79). The lifting of censorship in 1919, however, did not prevent the law of 1881 from being severely questioned because of the defamatory excesses that it permitted, a fact that influenced the progressive discredit of the Third Republic. On August 28, 1939, censorship was re-established, although it was less strict than it was in 1914. It was preserved in much harsher terms in the Vichy territory (1940-1942) and in regions occupied by the Nazis. In the first case, this included orders and mandatory notices and eventually culminated in total intervention. The decrees of May 6, June 22, August 26 and September 30, 1944 issued by the government and resulting from the Liberation repealed censorship, but imposed severe administrative measures that, on occasion, had a similar impact.

⁹ Law from July 29, 1881, about freedom of the press.

The permanence of these administrative controls has been considered contrary to freedom of expression in normal times as well as in exceptional periods. As such, in the Vichy case, administrative authorities still can seize publications to maintain public order. The possibility of suspending constitutional guarantees during states of emergency, siege¹⁰ or war¹¹ allows for the possibility of re-establishing censorship (Dérieux, 2005, p. 69).¹²

Summary

After a century of relative freedom of expression, which established the model of the liberal press, the four countries we examine experienced a return to government censorship imposed by their respective totalitarian regimes. For 50 years, from 1926 to 1976, censorship was present within this Euro-Mediterranean bloc, and between 1940 and 1945 it was present in all four countries at the same time. Together with the collapse of the liberal business model of the 1920s and 1930s, this censorship was the cause of a complete interruption in the evolution of the press in the middle of the 20th Century. France and Italy regained their freedom of the press at the end of World War II, whereas Portugal and Spain continued with restrictions until 1974 and 1976 respectively, thus prolonging and intensifying the break with the previous democratic system.

2. *Systems of Control in Governments Allowing Freedom of the Press*

2.1 *Portugal*

The government that took power after April 25, 1974, proceeded to nationalize the main daily newspapers until the 1980s, when nationalized newspapers were privatized.

The program of the Board of National Salvation included the abolition of censorship and prior review and defended the creation of a committee for the control of social communication, theatre, and cinema until a new print media law was enacted. This committee had to safeguard the emerging democracy from "reactionary" attacks and had powers to suspend social communication groups that threatened the principles stated by the Board (Rui Cadíma, 2002).

The first big structural change in Portuguese print media after April 25, 1974, occurred when the government took complete or partial control of a large number of newspaper companies. This was a consequence of the nationalization of banks and other basic sectors, owing to the government's majority participation in the share capital of the companies through loans granted earlier by the bank to newspaper companies.

¹⁰ Article 35 of the French Constitution.

¹¹ Article 36 of the French Constitution.

¹² Article 16 of the French Constitution.

The nationalization of banks and insurance companies brought with it the nationalization of the daily newspapers that were owned by the most powerful economic groups.

As Mário Mesquita points out, from a political point of view, the nationalization of the press was, curiously, never justified, and always presented as an indirect consequence of the nationalization of the banks (Mesquita, 1996, pp. 360-405).

The Print Media Law, published on February 26, 1975, went into effect at almost the same time as the nationalization of the banks. As an indirect consequence, the government took control of the biggest newspapers. With the approval of the Print Media Law of 1975,¹³ freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and freedom of the press, integrated in the right to information, as well as the right to create newspaper companies, were established.

However, despite recognizing the freedom to create newspaper companies in article 7, certain limits geared to controlling the business aspects of these companies were established in article 8. In the same article, it was established that retail prices, advertising rates, and profit margins of periodicals would be established by the administrators of newspaper companies. To do this, they had to factor in the delicate economic balance of the business and the real conditions of competition, while safeguarding the interests of consumers and the general price structure.

Moreover, in article 12, the so-called legal consignment became regulated. It established that directors of periodicals are obligated to submit copies of their respective publications to the National Library and other public libraries, to the library of the Ministry of Social Communication, and to the municipal council of the respective locality within three days after publication so copies can be available to the public in the municipal library. Additionally, as is detailed in article 13, a Print Media Register was created.

2.2 Spain

From a regulatory standpoint, the democratic liberalization of the press in 1977 started with a decree-law,¹⁴ which, to prepare for the general elections in June, cancelled or reformed the most restrictive articles of the law from 1966, especially numbers 2 and 66 regarding the limits of freedom of expression and the right to information, along with the penalties considered for violations. However, the decree-law preserved administrative seizure in the case of news contrary to the unity of Spain, the Crown or the armed forces.

At the same time, the disappearance of the Franco regime's National Movement as a result of the Law of Political Reform of 1977,¹⁵ which launched the transition, obligated newspaper ownership to

¹³ Decree-law no. 85-C/75, from February 26.

¹⁴ Decree-law 24/1977, from April 1, about freedom of expression.

¹⁵ Law 1/1977 for political reform, from January 4.

transfer to an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Information and Tourism. A few weeks before the 1977 elections, a decree-law¹⁶ transferred the assets of the Movement¹⁷ to the national treasury within an Autonomous Organization of Social Communication. Shortly thereafter, the first democratic government (1977-1979) abolished the Ministry of Information and Tourism, which permanently opened the door to deregulation. Finally, the Constitution of 1978 repealed all the articles of the law from 1966 that opposed it,¹⁸ in particular articles 20 and 38 regarding freedom of expression and freedom of enterprise.¹⁹ Although 17 newspapers from the old Movement had already closed in 1975 and 1976, and after an attempt to reorganize and modernize the public television channel, the remaining 22 state newspapers were eventually abolished by a law from 1982²⁰ that forced them to close or be block auctioned, benefitting other established or emerging private groups. Technological advances, like the substitution of lead by offset and photocomposition, helped to close the state press, which was for the most part obsolete, and promote better-equipped private media.

The liquidation of the public ownership sector in its different aspects and the abolition of subsidies terminated the government regulatory cycle from the Franco era. As a reaction to previous state intervention and based on the Constitution of 1978,²¹ the new model left the evolution of print media exclusively in private hands and without any mediation by the state, with some exceptions on the regional level. With the specific laws nullified, as of 1989 only statutory legislation²² regulated newspaper companies, complemented by some laws like the right²³ of reply and the journalists' clause of conscience.²⁴ On some occasions, sectorial laws indirectly affect print media, like the Law of Advertising and Institutional Communication, which is designed to regulate news, advertising, and informational campaigns by the central government.²⁵

In fact, the deregulation that had begun with the decree-law of 1977 only expanded. For example, as of 1982, the publication of newspapers on Mondays and the consequent abolition of journalists' obligatory Sunday rest were authorized. This led to the extinction of the subsystem of trade unions based on the "Hoja del Lunes" (a newspaper published by provincial press associations). Likewise, the old Official Schools of Journalism²⁶ dependent on the Ministry of Information were replaced in 1975²⁷

¹⁶ Decree-law 23/1977, from April 1, about restructuring the National Advisory Bodies of the Movement.

¹⁷ And of the official unions.

¹⁸ Spanish Constitution: Order of Annulment. 3): *Likewise any regulation that is contrary to what is set forth in this Constitution is hereby abolished.*

¹⁹ The only limitation set by article 20.4 refers to the right to honor, to intimacy, to images themselves, and to the protection of youth and infancy.

²⁰ Law 11/1982, from April 13, about Abolition of the Autonomous Organization of Social Communication.

²¹ Article 20 of the Spanish Constitution.

²² Mercantile Register (1989), Law of Public Corporations (1989), and Law of the Defense of Competition (1989).

²³ Organic Law 2/1984, from March 26, regulating the right of correction.

²⁴ Organic Law 2/1997, from June 19, regulating media professionals' clause of conscience.

²⁵ Law 29/2005, from December 29, about Advertising and Institutional Communication.

²⁶ Madrid in 1941, La Laguna in 1964, and Barcelona in 1968.

by Departments of Information Science attached to different universities, which, in 1980, graduated their first class of journalists. The principle of mandatory membership in professional associations lost its validity in 1977 due to the regulation of the right-to-trade union affiliation,²⁸ which implemented an open and voluntary system of affiliation. The Official Register disappeared on June 30, 1982, with a simple regulation from the Secretary of State. After this time, an official degree was not required, except when applying for civil servant positions, leaving it up to the companies to decide whether or not to request one. In summary, according to the Constitutional Court, "those who earn a living through expressing ideas or opinions or communicating information exercise these ideas and opinions more often than the rest of their fellow citizens, but derive no privilege from this."²⁹ In 1985, the law that created the Catalonia College of Journalists established the voluntary nature of affiliation.³⁰

Although the prevailing opinion is that the press should be subject to common law, deregulatory policy has created controversy among those who consider the press a public service that ought to be regulated, as is audiovisual media. Insofar as the Constitutional Court believes governments should ensure the fulfilment of basic rights, news companies should have their own statute to safeguard them. On the contrary, the development of the 1984³¹ law about subsidies for newspaper companies defined and regulated these companies and news agencies, but only in terms of receiving the expected subsidies. As such, aspects like the legal structure of these companies, their composition, their share transparency, and their connections with other companies, as well as their internal regulation to guarantee freedom of expression, are not regulated (Celeste Gay, G1991, p. 406).

2.3 Italy

In 1948, the *Legge sulla stampa* was published. This law regulated the Italian press system and has survived with different modifications up to the present day. This law, composed of 25 articles, defines obligatory instructions for printed publications, civil responsibilities of their directors, registration, penalties for defamation, etc. As a result, the Royal Decree of Law 13 from January 14, 1944, was repealed.

It was not until 1963 that journalists were required to register in a professional association to work in the profession. This requirement was stipulated in article 29 of the *Legge sull'Ordine dei Giornalisti*. In the same law, article 32 declared that passing a written and oral test on the technique and practice of journalism was a mandatory prerequisite to obtaining permission to work as a reporter. Article 33 also regulated the registration of professional journalists, establishing a minimum age of 18 and requiring a declaration from the director of the media company (newspaper, radio, television, or new

²⁷ At the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

²⁸ Law 19/1977, from April 1.

²⁹ STC 6/1981, from March 16, FJ 4 and STC 105/1983, from November 23, FJ 11.

³⁰ Law 22/1985, from the Catalan Parliament, on November 8.

³¹ Royal Decree 2089/1984, from November 14.

agency) that certified the beginning of work, and later, after 18 months on the job, another declaration on the journalistic work carried out. To register, journalists had to pass a general culture exam.

The Law of December 29, 1990, confirmed this registration in article 45, indicating that nobody could work as a journalist if they were not registered in the professional association; it also noted that citizens of the member states of the European Community are to be treated in the same manner as Italian citizens in terms of having to register, even if they don't request the condition of reciprocity.

Article 10 of the Law of August 5, 1981, made it mandatory for editors of daily newspapers, magazines, and news agencies to join the national press register. Although retail distribution outlets were regulated, no authorization was necessary to sell publications at party headquarters, churches, or trade unions that had their own specialized publications.

2.4 France

The French government has been characterized by an evident control over the system of distribution and diffusion of the press, justifying it as a key element in the defense of news plurality and access to information. Within this framework, the distribution of French print media by the system of newsstand sales, which accounts for 70% of the print run distribution, is regulated by the principles stated in the Law of April 2, 1947, relative to newspaper and periodical companies and distribution groups and based on the legal principle that there is no freedom of expression without freedom of diffusion.

The ruling on the system of distribution attempts to guarantee each editor the possibility of accessing the system of distribution that they want, be it a system based on their own resources or a system of grouping. The ruling is grounded in the principle that all editors are equal before the system of distribution. There can be no discrimination in the public's access to the newspaper it chooses because of the system of marketing of publications. Therefore, the State has the responsibility to correct certain mechanisms of the market to assure news plurality.

To achieve its goals, the Law of 1947 organized distribution in view of the cooperative principle, establishing a system of messenger companies run by cooperatives of editors so that diffusion in the entire market was guaranteed for any newspaper that requested it. This eliminated the hurdles of entering the market faced by new editors.

Beyond controlling the structure, it is noteworthy how the government also intervenes in the conditions of remuneration of the parties involved in the distribution process, establishing it in view of percentages of total sales. Commissions are set by the legislator to assure that neutrality in diffusion is respected. They are considered necessary to avoid discrimination in the diffusion of titles, and this way the principle of equality and equal treatment among editors is protected, as envisaged in the Law of April 2, 1947. In decree no. 88-136 from February 9, 1988, conditions of remuneration of print media sales agents are set, establishing that if press consignees run a retail outlet by themselves, they cannot exceed 23% of the total sales calculated according to the retail price. If they do not exploit points of sale directly, retail offices can count on 24% for newspapers and 29% for other periodicals.

Commissions for salespeople (newsagents, shops, etc.) cannot be greater than 15% of total sales calculated according to the retail price. There are established exceptions like Paris, where they can earn 18% for daily newspapers. These commissions can increase 5% in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants. In the case of newsagents, commissions can be subject to an increase, as is outlined in decree no. 2005-1455 of November 25, 2005, which modifies decree no. 88-136 of February 9, 1988.

This profit margin for sales agents, along with the management of between 1,000 and 3,000 products that the distributor gives them, has caused the number of newsagents to plummet to around 28,000. As a result, in France there is a point of sale for every 2,000 inhabitants, compared to one for every 1,400 in Spain, one for every 1,000 in Britain and one for every 800 in Germany. From 1995 to 2003, nearly 4,600 points of sale in France disappeared.

The increase in unsold copies, around 40% of the print run, is another indication that the system functions poorly. The measures to guarantee plurality encourage practices that bring about an increase in returns, which motivates publishers to consign copies to newsstands without adjusting the offer to the demand. This causes newsagents to devote more time and energy to handling unsold copies than to improving sales.

Faced with this situation, the National Union of Press Distributors (UNDP in French) has proposed to modify the regulations and authorize newsagents to decide for themselves how many titles they can sell in view of their clientele and the space they have to work with, under the responsibility of messenger services and press consignees.

Summary

With the recovery of their respective democracies, the four subject countries adopted legal formulas for government intervention in the press, albeit each in its own way. In Spain, beginning in 1976, an extensive deregulation process began, although its government was given a large role in the business reorganization and expansion of the 1980s. Regulatory liberalization advanced throughout the bloc in the 1990s under the umbrella of liberal economic policies, although the controversy regarding the public service aspect of the press and the advisability of preserving it by means of public powers has persisted. The highest level of government intervention is still found in France, which is in line with the traditional principles established during the French Revolution.

3. Incentives of the State: Newspaper Companies and the Right to Information

3.1 Portugal

The constitution of the Portuguese republic, approved in March 1976, devotes four articles to social communication, covering freedom of expression and information, freedom of the press, government news media, and the right to broadcast. It addressed freedom of expression and information, which cannot be impeded or limited by any kind of censorship, and guaranteed freedom of the press.

In this sense, it is interesting to note the *Porte pago* (paid postage) instituted on October 1, 1976. It consists of the government paying the shipping costs of periodicals for subscribers in national territory or abroad. The *Porte pago* was backed by the government's obligation of support and legally justified by the unfavorable socioeconomic climate.³²

The end of the 1990s marked the beginning of a period in which new incentives went into effect. A confrontation arose between two camps: those who backed a protectionist government policy³³ toward the nearly 900 titles of local and regional press registered in the *Instituto de Comunicação Social* versus the defenders of a liberalization process with new challenges in innovation and creativity that they believed the survival of the media hinged upon. As such, in the year 2000, comprehensive paid postage ceased to exist. The Secretary of State of Social Communication, Arons de Carvalho, opposed the former system, which fostered passivity, opportunism and complacency with a subsidy of dependency.³⁴ It is considered to be a system that did not favor low-capacity editors lacking legally regulated business and professional organization.

In 2001, the change was justified by the government in view of the need to modernize and professionalize the press sector, preventing the abuse of the 100% tax, which generated uncontrollable expenditures and gave rise to situations of unfair competition. It was also justified because of the need to encourage the hiring of journalists. The gradual reduction of paid postage stems from the perception that it is a measure that supports companies more than it supports reading. The number of titles of regional papers increased greatly until it reached 900, although the print runs had been decreasing, which calls into doubt the effectiveness of this measure as a way of encouraging people to read newspapers.

As of January 2005, the government system of incentives for social communication was regulated by decree-law no. 7/2005, from January 6. The law tries to achieve goals that include converting local news into a real agent of local and regional development, consistently opening the horizons of multimedia communication, promoting the reading of local newspapers as a true vehicle of culture, developing strategic agreements among media groups without affecting their business independence, and encouraging the hiring of media professionals.

Once again, incentives for business initiatives and multimedia development, as specified in decree-law no. 7/2005, were designed to develop news and radio companies on a regional and local level. They sought to replicate the professionalization of the companies' organizational structures and qualified

³² Decree-law no. 56/2001, from February 19, referring to the state system of incentives, specifying that, as the media is indispensable for exercising the fundamental rights of a democratic and pluralist society, it is the responsibility of the state to participate in the effort of modernizing and professionalizing the sector . . . That effort is especially urgent in the cases of local and regional organizations . . .

³³ In 2003, at the Congresso da Associação da Imprensa Cristã, there was a demand for the government to support the promotion of newspaper reading and diffusion of the press.

³⁴ Compare at www.secs.pt

personnel, and they were especially geared toward supporting strategic initiatives, infrastructures, technological and multimedia development, and diffusion of journalism.

In 2007, incentives for business initiatives, multimedia development and training, and development of human resources were substituted by a single incentive in the case of regional and local social communication companies — the incentive to read regional newspapers, established in decree-law no. 98/2007, from April 2. It involves a system designed to encourage reading and sets a proportional system of dividing the postage costs of periodicals. This, in turn, gives rise to a deliberation between the need for state intervention in the spreading of the Portuguese identity and culture on one hand and the increase in new media conceived to diffuse news content on the other. The participation of the government was set at 60% of shipping costs in 2007, and later reduced to 50% and 40% in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

In order to reduce paid postage costs and in keeping with the plan of incentives for the press, the creation of the Regional Press Web site³⁵ (<http://www.imprensaregional.com.pt/>) was approved in the Portuguese Cabinet and launched on April 5, 2007. The initiative's goal is to permit electronic access to the contents of regional periodicals in Portugal and abroad.

The Regional Press Web site, outlined in article 6 of decree-law no. 98/2007 from April 2, serves as a free space for electronic editions of regional general information periodicals and publications of specialized information, as defined in article 5 of the aforementioned decree-law.

This Web site is the result of the new system of incentives for promoting reading and access to information, normally known as *Porte pago*, and aims to stimulate technological innovation in the sector and make it easier to access Portuguese periodicals from any part of the world.

3.2 Spain

The Union of Democratic Center (UCD in Spanish) administrations (1977-1982) maintained a system of subsidies for the press that were distributed on a discretionary basis and reached a sum of around four billion pesetas (25 million Euros). Although much less influential than during the Franco regime, some of these subsidies for newspaper companies and new agencies were regulated³⁶ in 1984 under the socialist government. The law distinguished two types of subsidies: direct subsidies to stimulate distribution (especially of low-selling general newspapers), consumption of paper, and technological upgrades; and indirect subsidies in the form of taxes, postage, and funds for the distribution and communication of non-daily general news publications. From 1983 to 1987, 14.2 billion pesetas (85 million Euros) were awarded in subsidies overseen by the Chamber of Deputies through annual reports.

³⁵ See, www.imprensaregional.com/pt

³⁶ Law 29/1984, from August 2, regulating the awarding of subsidies to newspaper companies and news agencies.

The growth of the economy, that is, of advertising, and the demands of the European Union when Spain joined³⁷ it put an end to these subsidies, which jeopardized the smallest companies that required protectionist measures to survive.³⁸ Direct subsidies were abolished by a law from 1988,³⁹ which partially repealed the law from 1984. However, some subsidies were maintained for linguistic reasons in different parts of the country. These subsidies were granted by the central government but limited to the autonomous regions that have an official language. Most of the indirect subsidies were abolished in 1990.⁴⁰ In any case, by 1991, all government subsidies had disappeared. As a result, today in Spain, the only ones that exist are those relative to postage, and they do not have much impact because companies have their own distributors. Likewise, a value-added tax of only 4% is applied to the sale of newspapers, although that depends on European Union regulations. It would seem impossible to reinstate direct subsidies for the press, but indirect subsidies could return through tax reductions, especially the value-added tax, and through institutional advertising (Morales, 2006, p. 106), as well as through the promotion of reading and subsidies for technological upgrades (Cambredó, 2006, p. 132).

In any case, for newspaper editors, subsidies for newspapers are a regulatory tradition consolidated in several European countries, with the exception of Spain. They were conceived to defend and foster plurality in the midst of the economic crisis of the 1970s, and since then they have been applied without interruption in most countries. As such, it is surprising that the successive rescue plans and development of public investments in Spain have until now omitted subsidies for the press. Some regular and consolidated subsidies in countries like France, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and Portugal should be allocated to promoting the reading of newspapers (AEDE, 2008, p. 1).

3.3 Italy

3.3.1 The Media

The Law of August 5, 1981, affirmed in article 13 that government administrations and non-territorial public bodies, excluding economic entities, had to allocate no less than 70% of their budgeted advertising expenses to newspaper and magazine advertising, all of it without discrimination and with equitable and objective criteria. Additionally, in article 16, it is stated that regions could take measures to reduce distribution costs and favor consortiums.

Although initially an interministerial committee regulated the price, as of January 1, 1988, it was free. It would be the decree of April 24, 2001, that stated the sale price established by the producer could not be modified at the retail outlet. From 1981 to 1985, between 24 and 48 liras per copy were contributed to newspaper editors who printed from 50,000 to 200,000 copies. Also during this period,

³⁷ Spain's official membership began on January 1, 1986.

³⁸ In 1988, the 10 biggest groups controlled 72% of the daily press.

³⁹ Law 37/1988, from December 28, about the national budget for 1989.

⁴⁰ Law 31/1990, from December 27, about the national budget for 1991.

nonperiodical publications and magazines received subsidies — up to 450 liras per kilogram (20 cents of one Euro) — for the cost of paper,. During this same period, press agencies were subsidized with a total up to of 4 billion liras annually (2 million Euros).

As for telephone, telegraph, postal, and shipping rates, there was a 50% reduction in telephone and telegraph bills, and up to 50 billion liras annually (26 million Euros) for postal and telecommunications services. In addition, financing for economic-productive restructuring was established. This included improvements to facilities, equipment, retraining of personnel, etc. These subsidies had a maximum duration of 10 years. The Law of March 7, 2001 continued the subsidy system, establishing a specific fund for the promotion of computer networks, user connections of international data transmission circuits, and satellites.

3.3.2. *The Right to Information*

In defense of reading and access to information, article 15 of the Law of 1981 stated that all high schools and secondary schools had to make newspapers and magazines available to students, in addition to a place to read them. This right to information would expand in 1986, when subsidies were established for Italian publications printed abroad and those published in Italy, but distributed primarily abroad.

Also subsidized were publications of "high cultural value." Advertising had to account for less than 50% of the contents, and the publication had to have "scientific rigor." The maximum limit of financing could not be more than 50% of the cost of the publication. As outlined in article 8 of the Law of 1987, with the goal of representing the country's linguistic plurality, contributions were 15% higher for those newspapers edited entirely in French, Latin, Slovenian, and German in the autonomous regions of the Aosta Valley, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige.

For its part, article 9 of the Law of 2001 established a fund for the promotion of books and published material of high cultural value; this subsidy reached two billion liras annually (one million Euros).

3.4 *France*

Embracing freedom of diffusion of thought and equality in access to sources of information and the diffusion of said thought, France has developed a system of subsidies focused on the diffusion and distribution of print media. These subsidies are detailed in a government policy formulated with three main objectives: 1) subsidies for developing diffusion; 2) guarantees of independence and defense of plurality of publishing houses; and 3) multimedia modernization and diversification of newspaper companies.

However, on analyzing the system of subsidies for print media, it is noteworthy how a broad system of subsidies for print media to promote freedom of diffusion and access to sources is combined with a model of control regulated by the government with regard to the activity of newspaper companies. The distribution system and the results of diffusion (referring to the number of copies) are regulated by

law, which undoubtedly impacts newspaper companies' development strategies when considering the competition.

Subsidies for the press in France are viewed as subsidies for readers, not as subsidies for companies. Direct subsidies are almost exclusively allocated to companies that publish newspapers and political and general news publications. Other types of print media do not profit nearly as much from them. Direct subsidies include subsidies for diffusion, subsidies for competition and maintenance of plurality, and subsidies for modernizing and diversifying newspaper company multimedia.

Indirect subsidies benefit the press as a whole. The only condition is that the publication has to fulfil a series of criteria before the Equality Commission of Publications and Press Agencies (CPPAP in Spanish) that include being in a situation of legality, publishing regularly (at least once a quarter), devoting less than two thirds of its space to advertising, and being a publication that sells well. These subsidies are focused on the postal system, establishing preferential rates, and the tax system.

Subsidies for modernization of the press can be awarded to companies and press agencies to undertake such projects, which can be collective. In 2005, a total of 124 projects were presented and examined by an orientation committee, and 107 modernization projects received subsidies worth a total sum of 48.4 million Euros. The main beneficiary of the funds was regional daily newspapers, which received 38% of the subsidies in 2005. The national daily press received 18% of the total, departmental newspapers received 12%, and the regional press received 14%. From 1999 to 2005, 733 modernization projects received subsidies worth a total of 187 million Euros.

As established in Decree no. 2004-1310, from November 26, 2004, distribution subsidies are awarded on the basis of the following criteria: Papers must be French-language national dailies devoted to political and general news; they must be published at least five times a week; and they must hold the registration title issued by the CPPAP. The subsidy is awarded on the basis of each issue's sales.

Subsidies for the distribution of national political and general news dailies strive to consolidate the cooperative system of press distribution. In addition, they aim to preserve the plurality of political and general newspapers and the development necessary to effectively exercise the freedom proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789.

Summary

Press subsidies have been part of government intervention in the sector in all four countries, but particularly in France and Portugal. These subsidies were somewhat smaller in Italy and, beginning in 1984, they were practically nonexistent in Spain. Nevertheless, aside from financial and fiscal aid, the four governments can intervene through other means, such as regulating newspaper distribution, institutional advertising, or the support of co-official or sectorial language newspapers, etc. Since 2008, the economic crisis has led many media companies to request direct aid from the government.

4. *Limits to Concentration*

4.1 *Portugal*

Article 1 of the Law of Portuguese Press (1975) recognizes the right of citizens to be informed under certain guarantees of transparency, among which is the adoption of anti-monopolist measures. Article 7 of this law, devoted to freedom of enterprise, establishes that newspaper companies structured like a business association would be subject to Portuguese laws. They had to be located in Portugal and direct or indirect participation of foreign capital could not exceed 10%. Foreign partners did not possess the right to vote, and any foreign capital that exceeded 10% of the total would be collected by the government, independently of other sanctions. In the case of periodicals owned by a public corporation, all shares would have to be registered.

Article 8 deals with free competition and anti-monopoly legislation. It establishes that a special law will guarantee that the press carries out a public function independent of political and economic power. In doing so, it attempts to prevent the conglomeration of newspaper and media companies.

However, during the 1990s, the trend in the Portuguese market was for media companies to concentrate. This situation prompted the government to react in July 2005 by presenting a bill that established the exact number of mass media that private entities could have.⁴¹ It was proposed that each group could have only one free-to-air television channel, two radio stations with national coverage, three national dailies or weeklies, and a regional daily. Numerous proposals were incorporated into the bill to clarify when the Regulating Body for the Media (ERC in Spanish) would intervene. It would step in whenever a company surpassed 50% of the market share in circulation or audience; when the same institution had more media than allowed in two or more relevant markets; and also when it became aware of significant influence on the part of any one person or company.

These measures are supported in the text of the Portuguese Constitution, as well as in the Print Media Law of 1999. Article 30 of the Constitution makes it clear, in this sense, that the government reserves the right to prevent excessive concentration of the mass media, specifying that the government ensures the freedom and independence of social communication organizations before political power and economic power. At the same time, it details that the government supports nondiscrimination and prevents the concentration of media companies through multiple or cross-shareholding.

Article 4 of the Print Media Law⁴² (Law no. 2/99, from January 13) deals with the public interests of the print media. It is established here that, with the goal of ensuring the possibility of expression, the government will organize a system of non-discriminatory support incentives for the press, as well as control of acquisitions of shares in like entities by newspaper companies. This control will be subject to the

⁴¹ Erbon, Ariana: "Governo português propõe lei que impede concentração mediática": *Fazenco Media*, August 4, 2005 (consulted March 4, 2008).
(<http://www.fazendomedia.com/novas/internacional040805.htm>)

⁴² Law no. 2/99, from January 13.

High Authority for Communication, and competition will be promoted and defended against prohibited practices like the abuse of a dominant position and concentration of companies.

Therefore, as stated in the draft of the bill about Limits to Concentration of Media Companies (2006), these limits can be horizontal and diagonal, both established in view of market position with respect to circulation and audience. Horizontal limits are surpassed when the media, in the hands of the same company and acting in the same relevant market, exceeds 50% of the audience in the case of radio and television and 50% of the circulation per edition in the case of print media. Diagonal limits are considered surpassed when someone possesses media in two or more relevant markets such that the permitted audience limits are decreasing: 1st market (50%), 2nd market (33.3%), and 3rd market (16.6%).⁴³

4.2. Spain

From the point of view of print media entrepreneurs, the transition to democracy in Spain can be divided into two periods. The first period between 1976 and 1988 is characterized by the growth of the sector competing with independent radio and independent television stations, which were also expanding. The second is marked by a shrinking that, in certain aspects, could be noticed around 1980 because of the saturation of the market, and which lasted until 1994, with the development of private television channels after 1989 (Guillamet, 2001).

The liquidation of the state press in 1982 brought total freedom for entrepreneurial concentration without government intervention. A market economy of free competition and obtaining profits was imposed above the ideals of service and the public good that were characteristic of other regulatory systems. This freed entrepreneurial groups to pursue their business strategies. Since then, only common laws without explicit references to the sphere of print media have been applied. Although in the 1990s there was a system of ownership similar to the ownership of small farms, the general tendency was toward the concentration of printed media companies merging with each other and with audiovisual and digital media, forming multimedia groups.

At the same time, there has been an important process of concentration of printed media on the part of some national groups and large European groups have entered, above all in specialized press. However, the number of readers grows slowly and Spain has barely passed the threshold of development. (Jones, 2008, p. 21)

Regional print media groups were being established, some of which became very important, supplanting small companies that frequently were family owned. This did not prevent a marked instability in the structure of print media groups.

⁴³ Proposta de Lei sobre os Limites à Concentração da Titularidade nas Empresas de Comunicação Social, October 3, 2006.

European regulation in the 1990s to prevent entrepreneurial concentration has hardly had any effect in Spain. It was feared that the different national regulations would interfere with the free circulation of goods and services and progress towards a single market, so it was left to the governments to adopt their own measures. (Lancelot et al., 2006, p. 23)

In some way, the lack of share limitation in Spanish newspapers has enabled them to become internationalized. In any case, at present it seems essential for media groups to have multiple activities in the publishing and audiovisual sector to reach an international audience. Parallel to this, the production of international content by publishing companies — less so in the case of audiovisual companies — is achieved only through very precise synergies. The challenge will be in getting these large global media groups to coexist with smaller national and regional groups to guarantee news plurality. Only the Grupo Prisa, publisher of *El País*, and, to a lesser extent, Unidad Editorial, publisher of *El Mundo*, have achieved a significant international dimension.

4.3. Italy

It wasn't until 1981 that the discipline of newspaper and magazine publishing companies was regulated again. In this instance, a company's position was considered dominant if in the previous year it had printed more than 20% of the total print run of newspapers in Italy, or if it owned more than 50% of the newspapers published in a preceding year and always had more than one newspaper (similar to article 2 of the Law of February 8, 1948, no. 47). A position of dominance was also defined as those newspapers, which in the previous year had exceeded 50% of the total print run of all newspapers that were distributed in the same interregional area. With some modifications, the Law of February 25, 1987, confirmed the legislation established in 1981.

One of the most relevant aspects of the Italian print media system is the distinction between provincial, regional, multiregional, and national newspapers according to the model of distribution and the type of coverage given by the newspapers. Consequently, it was necessary to define the interregional areas: the northwest, which includes Piedmont, the Aosta Valley, Lombardy and Liguria; the northeast, which includes Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Emilia-Romagna; the center, with Tuscany, Le Marche, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo; and the regions of the south, which complete the 20 regions that constitute the trans-alpine country, including Sardinia and Sicily.

The division between these areas is also reflected in readership percentages: the newspaper penetration rate is 50% in the north and the center, but only 33% in the south (FIEG, 2008). Newspaper readers from the northern regions (45.4% of the population in absolute terms) account for 55.7% of the sales of Italian dailies, whereas readers from the central regions (19.5% of the population in absolute terms) account for 21.8% of sales. Repeating the tendency, readers from the southern regions (with a population of 35.1% in absolute terms) account for only 22.5% of sales. As for circulation, article 16 of the Law of 1981 declared that distributors had to guarantee distribution service for all newspapers that requested it, adhering to equitable practices with respect to retail outlets and the number of copies distributed.

In terms of internationalization, it is worth mentioning the Italian RCS Media Group (publisher of *Corriere della Sera* and *La Gazzetta dello Sport*) and its close ties with the Spanish Unidad Editorial.

4.4 France

Historically, the evolution of print media companies in France has been marked by regulatory measures designed to guarantee the right to freedom of information, establishing a system that combines public subsidies for the press with legislation conceived to control aspects like ownership, systems of distribution, and market shares. It is understood that the limits imposed contribute to guaranteeing plurality and equal opportunities among publishers, like measures aimed at guaranteeing freedom of diffusion of thought, equality in access to sources of information, and diffusion of said thought.

The Decrees of August 26 and September 30, 1944, can be regarded in this light, as they established that news companies would be regulated because they had a specific mission, and their function was not to produce a good like the others. This was why it was necessary to protect them from economic powers and demand of them maximum transparency. Plurality, as a guarantee of a democratic country, was the focus of the new model, and the daily press avoided the trend toward concentrations of newspapers that was fashionable in other European and American countries. In 1984, the government established limits to concentration to ensure the transparency and plurality of print media companies, inspired by the spirit of 1944 and adapted to the reality of the era. As such, according to Law no. 84-937, from October 23, 1984, quotas were established with regard to market share controlled by a single group. The Committee for Independence and Transparency of the Press was created to oversee the application of the law.

The quotas remained in effect with Law no. 86-1210, from November 27, 1986, which established in article 7 that, in the case of political and general newspapers, no individual or legal entity could directly or indirectly control more than 30% of the national distribution of similar-type newspapers.

The limits to guarantee plurality are set in view of the market volume, given that, in reality, the social, economic, or political impact of the medium is a function of how many people the message reaches. However, we are talking about measures that oblige one to reconsider the rules of acting in the market, as growth limits editors and conditions their development to that of the competition. The bigger the diffusion of the competition is overall, the bigger the figure of diffusion calculated in view of 30% of the total diffusion in the market of newspapers of the same type.

In the 1990s, different proposals for European regulations were made to limit concentration, but they were not put into practice. The drafts stressed that the disparity of specific national regulations in relation to access to ownership of mass media could hinder the free circulation of goods and services, as well as the freedom to become established in the rest of the countries. European community law left member countries the freedom to limit concentration of the mass media (Lancelot et al., 2006, p. 23). Paradoxically, the French system does not propose any limitation in accessing control of publications and

magazines that are not published daily, a fact that has permitted it to convert publishing houses into media groups with a strong presence on an international level.

Furthermore, the distribution of French print media by a system of newsstand sales is regulated by the principles included in the Law of April 2, 1947, relative to the status of the companies and distribution groups of newspapers and periodicals and based on the legal principle that there is no freedom of expression without freedom of diffusion.

The regulations in the system of distribution attempt to guarantee each publisher the possibility of choosing the most beneficial system of distribution, whether it is a system based on the publisher's own resources or a system of grouping. This is based on the principle that all editors must be equal before the system of distribution. There cannot be any discrimination in acquiring the newspaper a reader chooses because of the system of commercializing publications. The government is responsible for correcting certain market mechanisms to ensure news plurality.

Considering the process of internationalizing multimedia groups that developed in the 1980s and 1990s, one must emphasize the strong internationalization of French magazines around the world. A presence of French media groups in French-speaking countries that is less pervasive than expected is also noteworthy, especially when we compare it with the powerful influence of the Grupo Prisa in Latin America and Portugal. One of the reasons put forward attributes the late decolonization of African countries (1950s and 1960s), which needed a period of freedom that was not only political but also economic in nature.

Summary

Limiting the concentration of journalistic companies has been one of the great concerns of the four governments, especially the French government. The stance against concentration of ownership is considered essential to guaranteeing informative and democratic pluralism. However, the rise of more and more international and multimedia holdings has reduced the effectiveness of the anti-concentration measures. The economic evolution of each country, within the general context of liberalization, has limited the extent of these measures, which are still the object of much debate within the communication sector. Of the four countries, Spain is the least interventionist in this area, in response to the limitations imposed by the Franco regime, and has gradually cleared the way for the formation of large media groups.

5. Conclusions

- 1) The regional peculiarities of these four countries are crucial to understanding the evolution of their print media systems, not only from a business point of view, but perhaps more importantly, from the structural differences represented by their readers.
- 2) In the countries analyzed, newspaper companies had to evolve historically within an economic framework of a capitalist system, although with different periods and aspects. This conditioned the application of specific regulations for the press and subjected the companies to the laws of the market in general (costs, salaries, advertising, transport, etc.) and to the competition

between them and other media sectors like television and radio. The preoccupation of French and Italian lawmakers with the defense and control of plurality on the part of the government — and the fact that it was brought about by the end of the Second World War — is significant.

- 3) The French model has been shown to be a system which combines a wide variety of subsidies promoting freedom of diffusion and access to sources with a model of government control that monitors the business activities of newspaper companies. In this sense, it is worth noting the control that the French government has exercised over print media companies with regard to systems of distribution and diffusion of publications, as well as conditions of remuneration for the parties involved in the commercialization process. This degree of control is justified as a model that guarantees neutrality of diffusion and protects the principle of equal treatment among publishers; it also enables a publisher to choose the most advantageous system of distribution. It is a system that has undoubtedly conditioned the business strategies of publishers dealing with market competition.
- 4) The Portuguese model established after April 25, 1974, has been characterized by interventionism and protection, as evidenced by the transfer of a large number of newspapers to government control after the nationalization of banking and the implementation of a system of incentives for regional press. This model has limited both business initiative and the development of creative strategies and innovation. It also has helped foster a market in which the viability of many newspapers is questionable. The Portuguese government's model of protection is based on subsidies for regional press, fundamentally through the *Porte pago* and limits to concentration of media, because, as it is set out in the Constitution, the government reserves the right to prevent excessive concentration of mass media. This measure is justified as a guarantee of media freedom and of independence from political power. However, time has shown that, in reality, what has been developed is a proliferation of newspapers of doubtful business profitability and little impact on the market with regard to diffusion. In this sense, *Porte pago* cannot be said to have fostered reading in a market that has seen the number of newspapers grow to 900 when diffusion and print runs diminish. This undoubtedly calls into question the effectiveness of these measures.
- 5) In Portugal, after the restoration of democracy, the government continued to defend the need for limits and business control of the print media; this included retail prices, advertising rates, and profit margins of periodicals. In contrast, the liquidation of the public ownership sector and the elimination of subsidies in Spain ended the era of state regulation, including the regulation of the role and stature of journalists. For its part, in France, the defense of plurality justifies the evident control over the system of distribution and diffusion of the press, under the principle that all publishers must be equal and, as such, the barriers that impede their access must be eliminated. In the case of Italy, regulation was centered mainly on the figure of the journalist, first through the *Legge sull'Ordine dei Giornalisti* (1963) and reconfirmed some decades later with the Law of December 29, 1990.

- 6) Whereas in Portugal, a system of subsidies based on *Porte pago* was defended; in Spain it was decided to eliminate postage costs, with a few exceptions, within a global economic context of liberalism. If it is true that in France subsidies were focused on readers; in the Portuguese model, the subsidies promoted neither reading nor innovation, creativity, or enterprising spirit on the part of publishers.
- 7) In the case of Portugal, the multiplication of the number of newspapers receiving state subsidies — up to 900 titles — did not prompt an increase in the reading of print media. Likewise, in Spain, the elimination of all subsidies for both diffusion and readers has prevented an increase in reading print media.
- 8) One of the problems of the Italian and French press is that, in the period of liberalization (which was not liberal) during the 1970s and 1980s, it was not known how to adapt certain characteristics of their print media systems that had ceased to function in the current context of modernization. In Spain and Portugal, the problem came when combining enterprising spirit, subsidies for publishers (but not for readers in the case of Portugal), and journalistic tradition.
- 9) The lack of entrepreneurial initiative in Portugal initiated a trend of news concentration that was eventually regulated with the goal of ensuring the freedom and independence of social communication entities before political and economic power. At the same time, in Spain, we find several simultaneous phenomena. First, there was an expansion phase of the press from 1976 to 1988 at odds with radio and the first independent television companies. Then a phase of contraction began in 1980 as a result of the saturation of the market and lasted until 1994. By 1989, the press was competing with private television channels and with the birth of the big media groups. In this phase of expansion, one can understand how the growth of the regional press occurred simultaneously with the construction of the government of autonomous regions, and why it presently remains the centerpiece of the Spanish press system. It should be noted that, with the arrival of the transition to democracy, there developed a process of coexistence among newspapers from the Franco dictatorship, regional groups that had since become very important, and new dailies that came into existence with the new democracy. Meanwhile, in Italy, regulation concerning concentration was established primarily on the basis of regional criteria (provincial, regional, multiregional, and national newspapers), which explains the newspaper penetration rates of 50% in the north and center and 33% in the south. In France, the limits on concentration are understood to be based on the need to guarantee plurality, freedom of expression, and freedom of opportunities among publishers.
- 10) If the French model is characterized by having a strong influence on coverage of news from Paris, and the Spanish model boasts the growth of the national dailies' regional editions, the Portuguese model, despite being the smallest in terms of territorial area, has been characterized by the excessive multiplication of local and regional newspapers. The Italian model has found a way to cover regional news needs in multiregional coverage.

In conclusion, we can agree that the State has undoubtedly had an important role in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean press which is analyzed here. However, we can also point out that these countries — mainly, but not only, due to linguistic considerations — have had a significant influence on the development of the media systems in many Latin American and French-speaking African countries.

Nevertheless, the development of the socioeconomic system established in the European Union in the last 40 years should not lead to the notion that the policies found in the Euro-Mediterranean countries and analyzed here can be “literally” extrapolated to other territories in the same cultural and linguistic milieu. This is because, among other reasons, many of those countries have not experienced political and economic development parallel to that of the analyzed countries. Furthermore, the regional political model, different in each country, makes it very difficult to establish a prototype of Government regulation. Although the policies aimed at the development of the press may be similar, it is necessary to clearly distinguish the different characteristics and regional peculiarities of each country when we look at how those policies are put into practice. In this sense, the development of newspapers has been very uneven given that in all of these countries they have experienced censorship and control, have received direct or indirect aid, and have been affected by measures of varying strictness meant to limit the concentration of media ownership. In these issues, the different criteria that have prevailed on the part of the governments have had an influence that has led to unequal business development, with the resulting repercussions in the current position of the press, as well as in its strengths and weaknesses in the different countries.

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